

(Note: The information presented as an attachment to [REDACTED] represents the complete original English text of the Viet Minh document entitled The Franco-Viet Nam Conflict which is admittedly propaganda. Two copies of this document, one in English and one in French, were made available in May 1947 by a representative of the Viet Nam Department of Information. The two texts differed considerably in detail. This is not unusual — it is simply the result of two different translators translating directly from Annamese into two different languages. Annamese, being a rather condensed language, is subject to considerable variation in translation. It will be noted that this English text is superior to that usually emanating from Viet Minh sources (and hence is left in its original form including second preference spellings of cities, etc.) and is presented here because of the light thrown on Viet Nam propaganda methods, the semi-concealed suggestions, innuendos and indiscretions contained in it, and as a possible cross check on information previously reported from rival sources.)

## THE FRANCO-VIETNAM CONFLICT

### CHAPTER I

#### HOSTILITIES IN COCHINCHINA - ATTEMPTS TO SABOTAGE PEACE

The conflict between Vietnam and France was launched with glaring provocation on 17 December 1946 by the French colonialists who wanted to restore their erstwhile colonial power in Vietnam by force.

It was the inevitable outcome of a series of underhand machinations and provocative action which aimed at annihilating the newborn independence which Vietnam had won at the price of her own blood.

French attack against the South: With effective power firmly in the hands of the new Provisional Government following the victory-crowned national Revolution of August 1945 and the abdication of Emperor Bao-Dai, the last sovereign of the Nguyen dynasty, President HO CHI MINH solemnly proclaimed to the entire world Vietnam's independence on 2 September 1945.

On 22 September 1945, exactly 20 days after the declaration of independence, the French colonialists staging a hurried come-back launched their treacherous attack against Saigon, the Vietnam southern metropolis. For the Vietnam people there could be no other answer than RESISTANCE, resistance without limit, resistance to the utmost.

As fighting went on with increasing ferocity, French troops gradually extended their control over nearly all the big southern cities up to Nha Trang.

But everywhere at the countryside and throughout the sprawling hinterland, Vietnamese troops and popular formations remain the undisputed masters of the situation. The bitter struggle entered its fifth month when there came about, after painstaking negotiations, the March 6 Agreements.

The March 6 Agreements: An Instrument of Peace. Article One of the Preliminary Convention recognizes Vietnam as a free state having its government, its Parliament, its Army and its finance within the framework of the Indochinese Federation and the French Union. The future status of Cochinchina was to be decided by way of referendum.

Article Two stipulated that the Vietnam Government was to extend friendly reception to the incoming French troops who were to relieve Chinese occupation forces.

In Article Three, the two high contracting parties pledged themselves to take all adequate measures in order to end hostilities at once. It was furthermore agreed that negotiations were to be started at the earliest date either in Hanoi, Saigon or Paris in view of solving pending problems between the two countries, notably Vietnam's diplomatic representation abroad, Indochina's future status, and France's cultural and economic interests in Vietnam.

The Vietnam Government was prompted to sign the March 6 Preliminary Agreements by a deeply-felt and self-consistent conviction. These agreements were and should have been the first step toward a lasting harmonization of Franco-Vietnam relations. They were and should have been an effective contribution to peace and appeasement between the two peoples whose antagonism already sadly deepened by 80 years of ruthless colonial exploitation, might yet be made unbridgeable by the 5-month old armed hostilities in the South.

1  
FREE

REFERENCE CENTER LIBRARY

94015

Such rapprochement was all the easier as with the overwhelming majority of the French people in favor of Vietnam and with the provisions of the March accords guaranteeing respect of Vietnam's sovereignty, there should have been no fundamental cause for disagreement and discord between this country and France.

Such were not, however, the views of the French colonial circles who had their vested interest in Vietnam and least of all of those who claimed to be France's representatives in Indochina. For these circles -- prominent among whom is the French High Commissioner Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu -- the March 6 agreement were, and -- in fact could not have been anything else than a mere "breathing spell" which France's internal difficulties and the international situation rendered necessary.

Had not Admiral d'Argenlieu himself once spoken of these agreements as a political expediency whereby he hoped to "take back by negotiations what has been granted by concessions"? Little wonder, therefore, that this French High Commissioner had left no stones unturned in setting at naught all the solemn commitments which he had once signed with Vietnam on behalf of his country France.

Violations of the March 6 Agreements: First and foremost was the systematic prosecution of military operations in Cochinchina regardless of treaty-stipulation providing for immediate cessation of hostilities. In justification of his action the French High Commissioner issued on March 12 a communique stating that the Convention did not apply to Cochinchina, the very place where hostilities were raging.

Various proposals were made by the Vietnam Government for the creation of a truce commission in Cochinchina. They were invariably rejected without explanations while in different operational sectors the French High Command literally summoned Vietnamese commanders and their troops to present themselves at French posts and surrender their arms. The latter's refusal provided the colonialists with the sought-after pretext for carrying on with the war. Obviously they would not be satisfied with anything less than complete destruction of the Vietnamese armed forces. This was further evidenced by the regime of white terror which claimed innumerable victims in all the zones under French occupation.

#### The Dalat Preparatory Conference.

It was in such painful juncture that there came about at the close of April the France-Vietnam Preparatory Conference at Dalat. But the Dalat Discussions only served to bring out all the clearer the fundamental divergency of views between the French and Vietnamese delegations.

Concerning the organization of the Indochinese Federation, the Vietnamese guaranteed full respect of France's cultural and economic interests. But for the French the Indochinese Federation was nothing else than a political trap calculated to restrict Vietnam's internal sovereignty on the one hand while on the other, Vietnam was compelled under all kinds of pressure to renounce her external sovereignty. With great insistency the French demanded that public services such as Justice, Public Works, Medical Assistance, Customs, which are the essentials of internal sovereignty should operate as "federal" institutions: in other words subject to direct French control.

With regard to the French Union, France alone would be entitled to enter into diplomatic relations with foreign countries on behalf of the countries forming that union, while the task of joint defense should be France's sole and exclusive concern.

It goes without saying that Vietnam's standpoint could not admit of a political Federation which was a direct infringement of Vietnamese sovereignty. Contrasting the French claims, the Vietnamese delegation insisted on the formula calling for economic unity of Indochina. It also demanded a separate army and separate diplomatic representations against Vietnam's offer of loyal and closest collaboration with France in the domains of defense and foreign policy. But no agreement could be reached on these points.

Concerning the referendum, the Vietnam Delegation obtained no decision whatsoever from the French delegates as to how and when popular consultations were to be held in Cochinchina. Likewise the crucial problem of immediate cessation of hostilities in the South was met with the same bad faith on the part of the French delegation who sought to side-step the issue. So that the Dalat Preparatory Conference ended without any positive decision being taken. Whereupon both delegations decided to refer the solution of controversial issues to the works of a new Conference due to be held in the French capital within the first fortnight of July.

-2-  
FILE

REFERENCE CENTER LIBRARY

94015

On May 19 the Vietnam Parliamentary delegation enplaned for Paris and was followed on 31 May by President HO Chi Minh who was to pay a courtesy visit to France.

Setting Up of Puppet Regime in Cochinchina - One day after the Vietnam President's departure, Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu set up a Provisional Government under Dr. Nguyen van Thinh in Saigon while Cochinchina was proclaimed an autonomous Republic within the framework of the Indochinese Federation and of the French Union. The creation of this government and of the Cochinchinese Republic raises a twofold problem:

- From the standpoint of legality, was the French High Commissioner entitled to set up an autonomous republic and recognize a provisional Government of his own authority? Obviously not, for the French Government and Parliament are alone competent in initiating such action.

- From the standpoint of the March 6 Agreements, the creation of the autonomous Republic of Cochinchina was a brazen violation of both the letter and spirit of the said Agreements.

In the first place it was an anticipation on the result of the referendum which had not yet taken place since it aimed at splitting up this rich southern region from the rest of Vietnam. In the second place the creation of a puppet regime going hand in hand with intensified military offensives in Cochinchina and in South Annam brought about new aggravation of France-Vietnam relations. Such arbitrary action was certainly not calculated to develop the favorable climate which Article III of the Preliminary Convention proclaimed to be the prerequisite to the opening of friendly negotiations which were about to take place in Paris.

Confirmation of this was substantiated some two weeks later when French troops, taking advantage of President HO Chi Minh's absence, launched a full-scale offensive against the Hois Plateaux in western Annam. The strongest protests against this brazen act of aggression were lodged by the Vietnam Government, but like all the previous ones they fell on deaf ears. For the French aggressors the rape of the Hois Plateaux had become a "fait accompli".

The Fontainebleau Conference and how it was sabotaged. - Meanwhile, the France-Vietnam conference officially opened on 3 July at Fontainebleau. In his opening speech, Mr. PHAM van Dong, head of the Vietnam Parliamentary delegation strongly denounced these systematic violations of the March 6 Agreements. As usual these renewed protests went unheeded by the French and finally the Conference set to work on the knotty problems which were left unsolved by the Dalat Conference.

All the while the French authorities in Indochina went on unconcerned with their sabotage works and their policy of accomplished facts. They ordered French troops to provoke an endless series of bloody incidents as a prelude to the realization of their aggressive plan in northern Vietnam. On the one hand they contrived now by force, now by ruse to capture strategic points and areas inhabited by the Tho, Nung, and Thai ethnic minorities whom they hoped to play up against Vietnam. On the other hand they sought to create unilaterally an Indochinese Federation of their own pattern at Sen-la, Phulangkuong, Bachinh and Tienyen where live the Indochinese minorities.

Simultaneously they set up in Haiphong and Hanoi the so-called Federal Services (Federal Police, Federal Customs, Federal Public Works, Federal Court, etc...) and this at a time when not one of the delegates at the Fontainebleau Conference had an inkling of just how the organization of the Federation would be like.

From the foregoing facts it was obvious that the French authorities in Indochina wanted to anticipate on the results of the Fontainebleau talks and put Vietnam before a "fait accompli".

This policy of accomplished facts climaxed in the so-called Federal Conference which was held on 29 July 1946 at Dalat under the auspices of Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu. There the High Commissioner's yes-men got together and after much speech-making and lip-service to the cause of French imperialism they adopted the project of the Indochinese Federation which was tantamount to pure and simple restoration of the former government-general.

This produced the paradoxical situation in which the basic promises of the Indochinese Federation were made the object of two separate conferences, the first due to the initiative of the French Government and the second to that of the French High Commissioner for Indochina.

Suspension of the Fontainebleau Conference. - It stands to reason, therefore, that if Admiral d'Argenlieu's sabotage works at Dalat were to be taken seriously,

REFERENCE CENTER LIBRARY

94015

the Fontainebleau Conference could then have lost all its "raison d'être". This point was brought home to the French delegation at Fontainebleau by the Vietnam head delegate and the Paris Conference was subsequently called off.

The discrepancy between the two viewpoints was too great to be easily ironed out. And since owing to France's muddled home situation, the French Government was not in a position to take a clear line of policy toward Vietnam, it was finally decided to postpone the resumption of the conference works to a later date.

The Signing of the Modus Vivendi. - However, informal negotiations were not altogether fruitless as prior to the departure of the Vietnam delegation from Paris, President HO Chi minh signed with the Overseas France Minister the September Modus Vivendi.

Thus it can be seen that throughout the period from 6 March to 14 September 1946 the Vietnam Government had spared no efforts in finding a common ground of understanding with France on the basis of the March 6 Agreements. Such was not however the intention or desire of the French authorities in Indochina. The numberless treaty-violations were a clear evidence of their determination to set at nought all attempts at rapprochement between France and Vietnam. The unending series of "faits accomplis" were additional proof of a set policy to sabotage the works of the Fontainebleau Conference.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HOW HOSTILITIES WERE KINDLED, PREPARED AND CARRIED OUT

The Modus Vivendi of 14 September 1946. - The France-Vietnam Modus Vivendi provided for the setting-up of various joint commissions in order to work out procedural rules bearing chiefly on the cessation of hostilities in Cochinchina, and on financial and economic measures. The military commission met for the first time on 7 November in Hanoi. Other commissions were still being the object of negotiations between the Vietnam Government and the French High Commissariat when hostilities were started by the French militarists in Haiphong and Langsen.

The Haiphong Affair. - Upon assuming power after the August Revolution, the Vietnam Government proceeded immediately with the reorganization of all public Services. This means that since over a year ago the Vietnam Customs Services had been functioning regularly in the Haiphong city.

When the question of the Indochinese Federation came up for discussions at Dalat, the French demanded that the Customs be reorganized as a Federal Service. This was rejected by the Vietnam Delegation who proposed that each country of the Federation should maintain its own customs service while matters relating to exchange, unified taxation and customs returns should be left to the decision of a joint commission to be created to this effect.

The Fontainebleau Conference was called off before this question had been touched upon. But in the course of discussions on the Modus Vivendi, the French once again insisted on organizing the customs on the Federal basis. They were met with the same opposition from the Vietnamese but a compromise solution was reached when both parties agreed to change the expression "Federal Customs" into "Union Customs".

The difference between Federal Customs and Union Customs resides in the fact that while the former is to be placed under total French control, the Union Customs leaves to each country of the Federation its own customs service working in close cooperation with other countries through the medium of mixed organisms.

According to Article 6 of the Modus Vivendi the procedures for implementing such system were to be worked out by special commission and it was perfectly normal that pending the creation of such commission the Vietnamese customs services should have carried on its activities as was in the past. But the French authorities were by no means willing to abide by the provisions of the Modus Vivendi. They were determined to restore colonial regime by force.

On the very day (30 October) when the Modus Vivendi came into force, Admiral Thierry d'Argeville made a lengthy speech in the course of which he showed a marked reluctance to call a halt to hostilities in Cochinchina.

REF ID: A66666

REFERENCE CENTER LIBRARY

94015

On the same day the commander of the Tonkin section of the RICM (Regiment of Moroccan Colonial Infantry) Captain Dercourt, issued a "special order" bearing on a detailed "offensive plan" against the city of Haifong.

How hostilities were started in Haifong and Langsen. - As usual hostilities were started with a series of acts of provocation.

on 16 November the French kidnapped 18 Vietnamese including 5 police constables.

on 17 November 5 other Vietnamese were arrested.

on 19 November the French seized the motor-launch "Namviet" and a 12-ton barge at Cuu Cam. As a result communications between Haifong and Quang Yen were disrupted.

on 20 November the French arrested a Chinese junk which was given due authorization by the Vietnamese Customs authorities. Vietnamese constables who happened to be on the spot intervened. They were immediately fired at with machine-guns from the French navy launches. A while later French tanks were seen taking up battle positions in all the main squares of the city.

The ultimatums were sent by the French base command ordering the Vietnamese authorities to evacuate at once the Chinese quarter. With the situation aggravating hourly, the Vietnamese Central Liaison in Hanoi drew the attention of the French authorities on the grave danger which the attitude of the French would entail.

At 1730 hours on 20 November the Vietnam Home Under-Secretary and the delegate of the Commander-in-Chief of the French troops in Northern Indochina, Colonel Lami, signed in Hanoi the cease-fire order. The order was faithfully carried out by the Vietnamese High Command but only partially by the French till midnight 20. On 21 November at 0330 hours they resumed hostilities. The tension somewhat decreased on the morning of 21 November with the arrival in Haifong of the Lami-Nam mission.

On 23 November Colonel Debès acting upon General Valluy's order sent to the Vietnamese authorities a 3-hour ultimatum following which he launched a general attack against Haifong. Simultaneously with the starting of hostilities in Haifong, French troops attacked Langsen on the Chinese border.

That responsibility for these incidents entirely rests with the French authorities in Indochina was even admitted by Frenchmen themselves, notably by Mr. Leon Boutbien, a prominent member of the French socialist party who accompanied Minister Marius Moutet during the latter's fact-finding trip in Indochina.

Mr. Leon Boutbien had established beyond any doubt that the present sanguinary conflict between France and Vietnam effectively began with the attack on Haifong and Langsen on 20 November 1946. The treacherous attack against Hanoi, the capital city of Viet-nam, on the night of 19 December 1946, was but a logical and inevitable sequence of the initial attack on Haifong.

Hostilities in Hanoi and throughout Northern Vietnam. - While fighting was raging in Haifong and Langsen, the Commander-in-Chief of the French forces in Northern Vietnam, General Morliere summoned the Vietnam Minister for National Defense to carry out without delay the evacuation of Haifong and its suburbs. This ultimatum was confirmed the following day, 23 November by a letter sent to Mr. VO Nguyen Giap.

The latter's proposal for the creation of a joint commission to study the question was rejected by General Morliere who gave it to understand that the conditions laid down by the French Command were in conformity with specific instructions he had received from the French High Commissariat.

General Morliere's ultimatum coupled with the latest act of aggression to date: the landing of French troops at Tourane, created an all-pervading atmosphere of nervousity and apprehension in the Vietnam capital.

In expectation of a general attack by the French army which might come at any time, the population began to evacuate the city while barricades were set

-5-  
FREE

REFERENCE CENTER LIBRARY

up in Hanoi and the provinces. These precautionary measures were made all the more imperative as the wave of cold-blooded murder and terrorism assumed the character of a veritable organized criminality. Not a day passed without its usual toll of dead and wounded. Personnel of the Vietnamese constabulary force and the civilian population were particularly exposed to the murderous attacks of the French soldiery as strict order had been given by the Vietnamese authorities to avoid all incidents which might precipitate the irreparable.

This was taken advantage of by unruly members of the French army who would rob, kidnap, arrest or kill Vietnamese citizens to their heart's desire and with absolute impunity. It was amidst such atmosphere that General Valluy left Saigon for Haifong where he met on 16 December General Morliere and Mr. Sainteny, Commissioner of the French Republic in Tonkin and North Annam. On the following day, 17 December, French tanks set out to destroy barricades in the Hang Sun Street and attack the headquarters of the Vietnamese self-preservation corps. The latter's resistance afforded the French the sought-after pretext to bring into play automatic weapons, heavy tanks and heavy artillery with which they razed the whole Yen Minh district to the ground.

On 18 December, General Morliere ordered the occupation of the Finance, Public Works and Communications Buildings. Simultaneously he summoned the Vietnam Government to transfer police-duty to the French army, to destroy all barricades and disarm all self-defense formations. To his impossible demands he got no satisfaction. Subsequently, hostilities went on with a general attack of the French army against Hanoi and other localities in Northern Vietnam.

Thus the French reactionary colonialists have succeeded in realizing their aggressive plan. The war which they had started over a year and a half ago in the South is now being carried to the North in view of reconquering Vietnam which their cowardice had sold down the river to the Japanese and which had regained its freedom with the blood of this land's children.

It may be noted that the launching of hostilities in Northern Vietnam was made to time in with the provisional period in which France found herself without a responsible government. The colonialists had to make hay while the sun shone, and accordingly war was precipitated in Northern Vietnam some two months before the Constitution of a regular government in France.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A WAR OF COLONIAL CONQUEST

It now remains for the French to justify the war of aggression and conquest which they had willed, premeditated and finally carried into effect.

The Colonialist's attempt at Justification. - That their war is a just war and their cause blameless is naturally the stock argument of the French reactionary colonialists and of all these whose interests it is to perpetuate the regime of exploitation and slavery in Vietnam. They assert that theirs is a defensive war, a war which has been started and imposed upon them by the HO CHI MINH Government. In the same breath President Ramadier and his Minister for Colonies declared that the present military operations in Indochina only aimed at insuring the security of French lives who, they said, were exposed to the treacherous attacks of the Vietminh.

And the Vietminh which is the present government was pilloried as totalitarian, aggressive, extremist and what not. The Vietminh alone was responsible for the war and it was the Vietminh alone that the French professed to fight - not against the Vietnam people nor against their liberty. On the strength of these sweeping assertions the French Government have hoodwinked the French people into a costly war and the French Parliament into voting a motion of confidence and military credits for the prosecution of hostilities against Vietnam.

A War to Enslave Vietnam. - This, in reality, is the underlying motive hiding behind the facade of high-sounding ideology and hypocritical attempts at self-justification. The voluminous record of facts and documents are a sufficient damaging testimony to the French guilt that no further elaboration is needed. They have

FREE

REFERENCE CENTER LIBRARY

94015

established beyond possibility of refutation that:

the French colonialists have systematically sabotaged all peace efforts. They it is who have premeditated, prepared and launched the present hostilities;  
they it is who have started war on 23 September 1945, in the South;  
they it is who have wilfully violated the March 6 Agreements so as to prevent all possibility of understanding and rapprochement between France and Vietnam;  
they it is who have brought war to Haifong and Langsen on 20 November 1946, preparatorily to blowing off the lid of a general conflict throughout Vietnam by the treacherous attack on Hanoi on the night of 19 December 1946.

In the light of such incontrovertible facts stands out all the clearer the ludicrous absurdity of the charge that Vietnam, a weak, badly armed and badly equipped country would have been guilty of aggression against the 150,000 French soldiers armed to the teeth with the most up-to-date implements of war. Plain common sense would suffice to make it abundantly clear as to just who are the aggressors and who the victims of aggression. A defensive war, a righteous war of resistance in defense of the country's freedom and independence: that is the Vietnam case. A criminal war for a criminal cause, the colonial war of conquest and plunder: such is the case with the French colonialists.

Even these colonialists themselves are fully aware of this, which fact leads them to recourse to lies and deceit for covering up an otherwise unjustifiable crime. Hence their propagandists' repeated attempts at insinuating the presence of Japanese in the ranks of the Vietnam armed forces. No less a personage than Mr. Paul Reynaud had proclaimed "urbi orbi" that the HO chi Minh Government was catapulted to power by the Nipponese fascists. Such was not the view, however, of the most-Christian Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu who would have the world believe that Vietnam was a hotbed of Communism and should, for that reason, be chastised for the sake of French imperialism.

But let us get down to the facts. And facts establish beyond a doubt that since 23 September 1945, the French have been using on a large-scale Japanese troops against our forces. Well known also is the use of large percentage of SS and elements of General Rommel's Afrika Korps in the present war in Vietnam. Another pertinent fact is that while the French colonialists complaisantly allowed the Japanese to turn Indochina into a powerful operational base against the Allied Nations, the Vietnam people opposed the bitterest repression clamped down upon them by both the French colonialists and the Nipponese fascists.

The numerous testimonies given to this effect by allied airmen who had parachuted in our "liberated zones", by allied officers who had fought shoulder to shoulder with our guerillas, by allied war correspondents and even by Frenchmen who had taken part in the Resistance in France, should therefore be final and decisive. Thus the Japanese scarecrow has proved to be a boomerang recoiling on the very nose of the unintelligent authors themselves. Failure to impute us in the very crime of which they were guilty explains why the French colonialists had to turn next to the convenient scarecrow of communism and accuse our government of being a tool of international Marxism. Indeed, there can hardly be a more eloquent testimony of this new piece of falsehood than the self-contradictory nature of their own trumped-up charges.

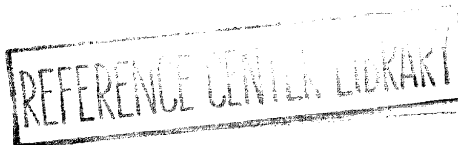
The HO chi Minh Government: a living embodiment of the Nation's will.

In other respects it may be noted that the Government of President HO chi Minh owes its legal existence to the universal sanction of the Vietnam National Assembly and the Vietnam people who had expressed their sovereign will at the general elections of 6 January 1946.

Englobing all classes of the population of all walks of life, of all faith and political hues, it is in the truest acceptance of the term a government of national union and national reconstruction. For this reason there has crystallized around the HO chi Minh Government an unanimity of view, conviction and purpose which has enabled the new-born state to withstand victoriously all past difficulties and crisis.

-7-

FILE





94015

Such unanimity was by no means unknown to or unnoticed by the French colonialists. Vainly they have tried to break up our national unity by patronizing a puppet government in the so-called autonomous republic of Cochinchina. They have only succeeded in stiffening the will of resistance which has been written in letters of fire and blood on all highways and byways of Cochinchina for the past year and a half.

If, therefore, the war in the South means anything to the colonialists it is in the fact that no amount of threat or blackmail or violence can ever impair the unanimity of the Vietnam people. This was one of the reasons why Minister Marius Moutet who once proclaimed Cochinchina a "French territory" had to eat up his own word and recognize in the September 14 Modus Vivendi the HO chi Minh Government as the only competent authority to negotiate with France on the cessation of hostilities in Cochinchina.

It was an indirect though factual admission that the HO chi Minh Government was the only legal representative of the popular will of the entire Vietnam people. Such admission was given added weight by the unlamented death of Dr. Nguyen van Thinh, President of the puppet government of Cochinchina. By hanging himself he had ended up his miserable career as a traitor and with him the useless farce of the farcical "autonomous Republic" for Cochinchina.

When, therefore, the colonialists indulge in a subtle differentiation between the Vietminh represented by the HO chi Minh Government and the Vietnam people, one may rightfully wonder why the French Government should have signed at all the March Convention and the September Modus Vivendi with a government which allegedly has no support of the people?

Again, when these colonialists pretend to fight against the Vietminh, i.e., the HO chi Minh Government and not against the liberty of the Vietnam people, it may be asked on which specific occasions have they swindled the Vietnam people. Was it when they made peace with Vietnam by negotiating with the HO chi Minh Government or is it when they pretend as they presently do to wage war against the HO chi Minh Government in order to make peace with Vietnam?

A War against the Vietnam People. - Be it what it may the certain fact is that no one in this country is likely to fall dupe to their subtle attempts at driving a wedge between the Vietnam people and their leaders. The war has confronted Vietnam with a decisive test and out of that test there has been born an indissoluble union of all classes irrespective of sex, classes, conviction or religion who have answered unreservedly to President HO chi Minh's appeal.

The heroism displayed by our soldiers, our guerillas and our civilians and to which due credit had been given by all foreign observers is additional proof of their implicit confidence in the HO chi Minh Government. It is also an indication that they are not fighting for any particular party or interest; they are fighting for something of first and foremost concern to them: their own right to be free, their own freedom now being in jeopardy.

That against the alien despoilers a whole people have risen up in arms to defend their very existence is, for the French Government, a very unpalatable fact, the gravity of which must be belittled and its dire consequences minimized.

Time and again efforts were made by Admiral d'Argenlieu and Minister Moutet in presenting their full-scale war as nothing but "police operations", should have necessitated an army of 150,000 strong, an imposing array of planes, tanks, guns, and super-dreadnoughts, and last but not least, a military credit costing the French taxpayers some 10 billion francs. Figures have their eloquence. Judging by the stupendous means thus thrown into the fray, it is clear that the French Government has staked its all on a full-scale war of colonial conquest against Vietnam. By taking up arms to fight off aggression under the leadership of the HO chi Minh Government, the Vietnam people have thus demonstrated their will to be a free and untrammelled existence and their determination to defend that existence whatever the costs.

-8-  
FREE

REFERENCE CENTER LIBRARY



94015

## CHAPTER IV.

## WE WANT PEACE.

Although war has been imposed upon the Vietnam people who have against their own will to resort to arms in order to safeguard their national existence, yet they earnestly desire peace.

We want peace for the primary reason that peace we need and peace we must have in order to reconstruct the country that has been ravaged and bled white by 80 years of colonial exploitation, treason and war.

We want peace because the present bloodshed between France and Vietnam is wholly unwarranted, unnecessary, and because both peoples are convinced that peace, a just and honorable peace would work to mutual profits and interests of the two countries.

But peace is not to be had since the colonialists are bent upon restoring their vested interests by the sword. Here again this technique is the same: to shift the blame on the shoulders of Vietnamese leaders by depicting them as blood-thirsty extremists whose concern it is to reject a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Facts, however, have their own tale: from 17 December 1946, to 5 March 1947, President HO chi Minh has sent to the French Government, the French National Assembly, the French people and various top-drawer French personalities no less than 11 messages, telegrams and appeals, all of which expressed but one insistent wish: a peaceful solution of the present bloodshed.

17 December 1946: President HO chi Minh appealed to Mr. Leon Blum in favor of an immediate cessation of hostilities.

22 December 1946: Addressing the people of France, of Vietnam, and of the Allied Nations, the Vietnam leader voiced anew his desire for peace.

1 January 1947: President HO chi Minh invited the French Government and people to end at once the fratricidal war.

How Minister Marius Moutet sought to evade the issue. - Late on, December 1946, the French Overseas Minister, Mr. Marius Moutet, was charged by his government with a fact-finding mission in Indochina. Upon his landing in Saigon and still unacquainted with the facts he had yet to forget out he sweepingly accused the Vietnam Government of being responsible for the war and glibly spoke of "repression", of a "test of strength".

In his New Year message, President HO chi Minh officially invited the French Overseas Minister to meet him in Hanoi. Had he accepted the offer, there might have been a chance of the present conflict reaching a peaceful settlement. But Mr. Moutet who did not come to Hanoi left the city 24 hours later without seeing the Vietnam President. Upon reaching Saigon, he hastened to disclaim any knowledge of President HO chi Minh's invitation. His own evasiveness showed that he had deliberately ignored the unique opportunity offered him to bring the Franco-Vietnam War to an end.

How the Ramadier Government sought to evade the issue. - On 26 January 1947, consecutively to the formation of the first government of the 4th French Republic, President HO chi Minh told President Ramadier in his congratulatory message:

... "We desire peace, a just and honorable peace for both France and Vietnam. We deplore the accumulated ruins and bloodshed."

But the appeal went unheeded. On 1 March, President HO chi Minh again wrote to the French Government and people:

"The Vietnam people desire nothing else than their independence and unity within the framework of the French Union and pledge to respect France's cultural and economic interests in Vietnam. We want an equitable peace honoring both France and Vietnam!"

Finally when the Indochinese problem came up for discussions at the French National Assembly, President HO chi Minh sent another peace message which ended as follows:

"We want our country's independence and territorial integrity. We want to collaborate with the French people in the French Union. We want peace in order to reconstruct the country. It behooves the French Parliament, people and Government to call a halt to this disastrous and fratricidal war."

"The United States have recognized the Philippines' independence. England

94015

has recognized India's independence. France the champion of the cause of freedom owes it to herself to make a similar gesture in favor of Vietnam.

"Enough French and Vietnamese blood has been shed. The war must not continue a day longer. We are ready to make peace. It only requires of the French Parliament and people to make a move..."

And what was the French answer to these repeated appeals for peace?

Speaking before the French National Assembly, Minister Moutet expressed doubt over the authenticity of President HO chi Minh's letters. And in order to side-step embarrassing questions he could not answer, he naively wondered if the Vietnam leader would still be alive or if he would still be free.

In the meantime the French National Assembly passed the motion of confidence in the government and voted a 10-billion military credit for the prosecution of hostilities in Vietnam. Thus to a sincere gesture for peace the French National Assembly and the Ramadier Government answered with an act of war in utter contempt of the express will of 2/3 Frenchmen and women who overwhelmingly condemn the war of colonial conquest and plunder.

However, undeterred in its indefatigable efforts for peace, the Vietnam Government renewed through duly accredited representatives in Paris its peace offer to the French Government. On the pretence that the Vietnam permanent delegation in Paris could not act on behalf of the Vietnam Government, the peace offer was again brushed aside while the deputy-chief of the delegation, Mr. Duongbach Mai, was arrested for no other reason than his being a former leader to the Resistance movement in Cochinchina.

In spite of his official status as a member of the Vietnam delegation to the Dalat and Fontainebleau Conferences - which status had until then been recognized by the French Government itself - Mr. Duongbach Mai was thrown into prison and later deported to Djibouti where he is presently being kept under military custody. (Shanghai Note: See previous reports for further information on Mai and his arrest).

This was the latest high-handed action to date, all of which went to show that pending realization of the so-called "military decision" the French Government is in no mood to allow peace to return to Vietnam. For the colonialists peace can only be had until it is a peace to be dictated at bayonet-points.

The Peace that We Want. A just peace based on Vietnam's National independence and unity within the framework of the French Union, such is our aspiration and such is also our inalienable rights solemnly guaranteed by the United Nations' Charter.

In those black days when she lay low and forlorn under the iron heels of Nazism, France had experienced the bitterness and humiliation of alien rule. At no time was there a more forceful realization creeping into French mind that no sacrifices were great enough for the cause of freedom and independence. So is Vietnam's innermost conviction today. Like the French people, the Vietnamese cherish their independence and are prepared to accept all sacrifices to keep freedom alive in their country.

The Allied Nations had fought for the same freedoms which as stated in the Atlantic Charter, should benefit all peoples, big or small, and should be the all-underlying principle regulating international relations.

In the spirit of this principle, the United States of America have recognized the Philippines' independence. Likewise England has pledged early independence to India and Burma. But France alone still fails to live up to this principle. France alone still refuses to recognize Vietnam's independence. France's leaders may profess to respect our freedom but that does not prevent an intensification of hostilities and deliberate attempts at annihilating freedom.

If for these colonial diehards, independence is but an empty word, for us it is a fact and a fact to be made into a living reality.

This means in the first respect full sovereignty rights both at home and abroad if Vietnam's independence is to be real, effective and not a sham.

Secondly, Vietnam's independence is made conditional upon her territorial integrity. There can be no question of splitting up Cochinchina from the rest of Vietnam either by violence or by political machinations such as the setting up of puppet regime and institutions in the South. Cochinchina is Vietnamese territory. It is in President HO chi Minh's own words "the flesh of our flesh and the bone of our bones".

As to Vietnam's participation in the French Union, it depends on whether or no the French Government is willing to recognize this country's independence and unity with adequate military and diplomatic rights. Our views, now as always is that the French Union should not be a political formula hiding under the cloak of a Federal

-10-  
PAGE

REFERENCE CENTER LIBRARY

94015

system, a set premeditation to eliminate what to us are the essentials of freedom. Nor should it be developed into a mechanism for exerting predominant political and economic influences over the people and resources of this country.

The French Union, if it is to be acceptable to Vietnam, should be as defined in the Preamble of the French Constitution: "a free association of peoples enjoying equal rights". This means that if Vietnam accepts the principle guaranteeing full respect of France's legitimate influences in Vietnam it is equally true that imperialism and vested interests must yield to the right of independence.

Therefore on the conditions whereby Vietnam can effectively realize her hopes and aspirations will she enter into loyal, fraternal collaboration with France and become a useful member of the French Union.

Inversely the realization of the French Union will depend upon quickly achieving acceptance of these basic conditions on which rests the possibility of an early peace between France and Vietnam.

Perhaps it may reasonably be hoped that knowing this the colonialists will desist from their present course of action which has not so far brought them any material profit in spite of nearly two years of war in Vietnam.

It is more than anything else a matter of expediency. For the 25 million Vietnamese have demonstrated with sufficient clarity that their freedoms have such vigor and are so dearly appreciated that to obliterate them is an impossible task.

Herein lie Vietnam's strength and her rock-like conviction in the final triumph of her cause.

It is a just cause.

It is worth fighting and dying for.

It must and will triumph for, as President HO chi Minh had once proclaimed, "history contains no record of a just cause which does not triumph in the end".

END

Vietnam, April 1947.

By TRAN CHI BINH

-17-

FREE

REFERENCE CENTER LIBRARY